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Title: Need to help tobacco farmers to take up alternative crops and provide them adequate compensation in drought prone Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI Y.V. SUBBA REDDY (ONGOLE) : Tobacco is the main crop in drought-prone and rain-fed Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. It produces 50% of tobacco grown in India. But, 18 suicides by farmers in Andhra Pradesh and 10 from Prakasam district this year alone indicate magnitude of problem.

Government of India earned Rs.6060 crores and Rs.5200 crores foreign exchange by exporting tobacco in 2013-14 and 2014-15 respectively. Secondly, it is providing employment to 36 million people.

Now, Tobacco Board/Government of India is impressing upon farmers to give up tobacco farming. But, the reality is that they cannot shun it overnight because they have invested lakhs on each barren land. In spite of this, they are willing to give up, but they are asking for compensation and enquiring the manner in which they can grow alternative crops.

My suggestion is that if farmer has two barrens, we can convince him to grow only in one barren. For remaining one barren, suitable compensation be paid by ensuring that he switches to other alternative crop. Tobacco Board which has in its kitty Rs.400-500 crores collected through cess, taxes, profits, etc. can pay compensation. Secondly, ITC is enjoying lion's share in tobacco profits. So, ITC should also be involved in this and share some burden of Tobacco Board. Thirdly, as ITC has Agro Products Division, it can guide tobacco farmers for producing agro products which it can buy from them. Finally, Commerce and Finance Ministries, ITC, MPs should join hands to find a permanent solution to this problem.